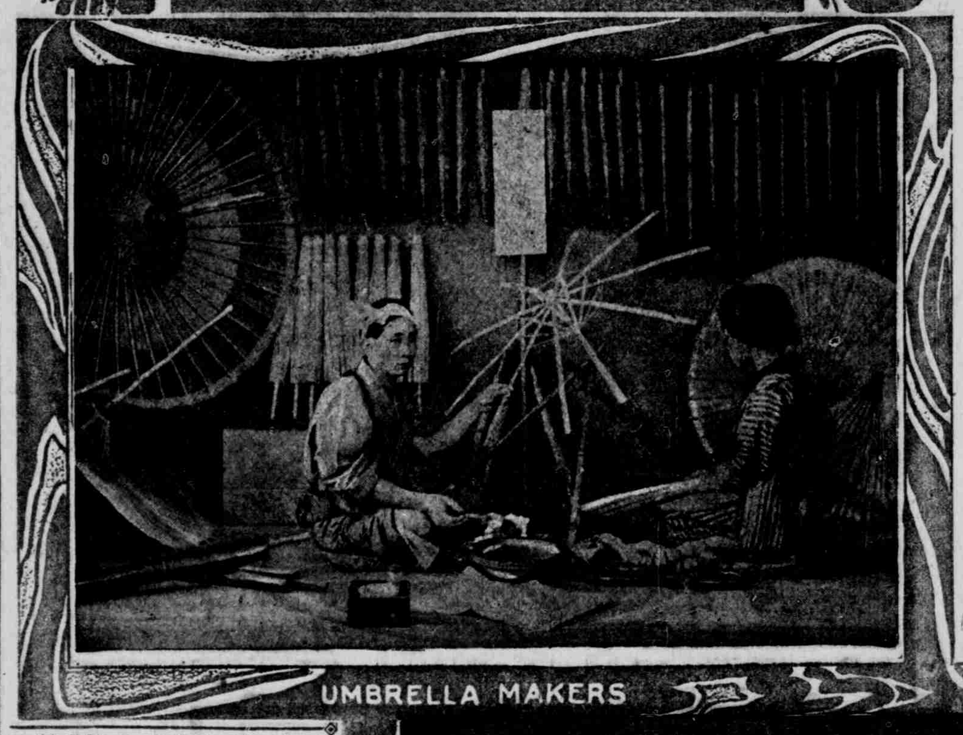
THEY SING AT THEIR WORK

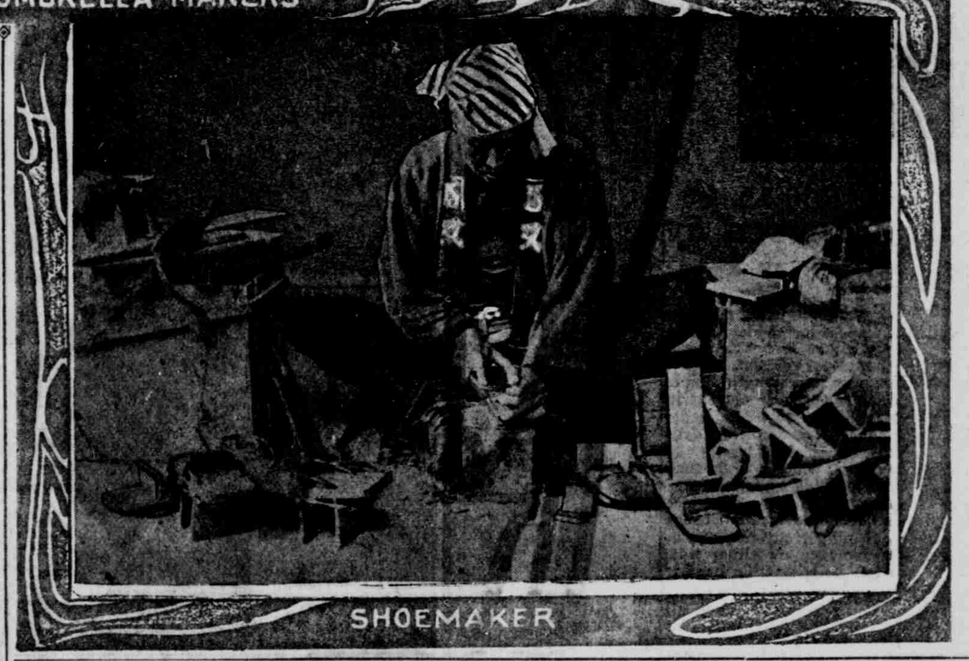
A COOPER

READY FOR WORK

CARPENTERS



UMBRELLA MAKERS



SHOEMAKER

Artisans, Mechanics, Laborers, All Who "Do Things" in Japan, Always Happy in the Doing of Them

By MARY GAY HUMPHREYS

BLUE is the workingman's color.

Whether it is the blue blouse of France, the American's overalls, the blue shirt and trousers of the Chinaman, or the blue tunic and leggings of the Japanese, by some unconscious instinct the toiler has chosen to wear that deep, full tint of blue that best harmonizes with the brown earth, the green foliage and the gray rocks. The tint grows more lovely under the rays of the sun and in the pelting of the rain. But the Japanese coolie adds to this color a jaunty picturesqueness of line that belongs to no other of these national manifestations in costume.

Even the Coolie's Raiment Is Picturesque.

The coolie's clothes rival the famous kimona of his native land, although without the kimona's foreign reputation. The coolie has the further distinction of belonging to the only class in Japan that drapes its legs, for the "hakoma," or gentleman's divided skirt, is seldom seen in public. Anybody who has ever observed a young Japanese gentleman riding his bicycle, kimona streaming out and his bare legs pedalling, or who has watched how they stow away the legs on the seat of a railway train, instead of resting the feet on the floor, knows that, however discreet the kimona may be in walking, it is very indiscreet at other times.

The coolie's trousers seem to be fashioned on his legs, they fit so closely, but some hidden fastenings permit them to be rolled up under his tunic, if his work demands. Both garments are of cotton. It is the tunic that gives distinction to the costume.

Every Japanese Workman Labels Himself.

Every Japanese has his crest. With this he signs all his transactions. This crest is stamped in white on the back of his tunic. On its lapels are the indications of his trade or employer's trade-mark, in the ideographs of Japan, which are in themselves ornamental, and make our alphabet seem a prosaic, homely convenience. When the coolie is at his work he tucks one end under his sash, and this reveals a facing of lighter blue, which is just one of those touches that French dressmakers give to their most artistic creations.

This is one of the many indications that these Frenchmen of the East are the most artistic people in the world. The crown of this costume is the folded strip of cotton cloth that the coolie folds over his head. They are stamped with designs so attractive that the foreign women buy them for bureau and buffet covers. When the coolie is hard at work, he binds the slip tightly around his brow, and it suggests some laurel-wreathed Augustus, or some triumphant Greek athlete. But the coolie's object is merely to keep the perspiration from running into his eyes.

Uniformity of Color and Repetition of Line.

On his feet he wears straw sandals with a string harnessing his great toe. He wears a pair out every day, but since they cost only the fragment of a cent he can afford it. A gang of coolies unloading a junk of rice is a moving picture; the more interesting because it is one that has not been sung and written about. Unquestionably this picture is heightened by the uniformity of costume, as well as by its individual attractiveness. The artistic value of uniformity of color and repetition of line permeates all Japan.

For obvious reasons, in the cotton mills, an industry of the new era, the operatives wear white, with white head coverings. Among them are thousands of girls. This, too, is an innovation, the importance of which, because of the freedom our women have always had, we can scarcely appreciate. To come upon these by the thousand in their snowy robes gives a poetic aspect to toil regardless of hours and wages, which are, doubtless, long and poor enough. These employees, after working hours, go for their hot water plunge in the pools which the company provides, and then put on their kimonas for the street. In Japan, as elsewhere, the employment of girls has introduced a number of ameliorating features. Such are the mill boarding houses, the night schools, the hospital, and the mill doctor of the great cotton plants of Tokio and Osaka.

The Dignified Nature of the Jap Policeman.

The Japanese are a serious people in public. The most dignified object in the world is a little Japanese policeman. He belongs to the "samurai" class. The "samurai" were the soldiers, priests, scholars of the old regime. He still has a reputation to maintain. The coolie has no such burden. He earns and spends jovially, and is not afraid to laugh. Like all the Orientals, he sings at his work. This is not any song to his mind. Rather, it resembles the sailor's "shanty," without the sailor's humor. It infers comradeship, organization, a community of interest. "Heave ho! All hands at the rope!" When the right word is reached up goes the beam, down goes the bag. But it does not go up until the right word comes along. The words have no more meaning than the letters of the alphabet, or Fred Stone's verse in "The Wizard of Oz," when words and ideas are exhausted.

It is as impossible for us to think of the American housesmiths or derrick hoisters singing at their work and waiting for the right word to swing the beam or bucket of stone out of the Subway as it is to think of these clad in the same cut and color as the melodious Japs; as difficult, also, as to find picturesqueness in the motley crowd of employees in a New England cotton mill. The Occidental "boss" certainly does not encourage music as an aid to labor. A nine-hour day, Saturday half holiday and a seventh day of rest in the heart-breaking race for wealth do not admit of waiting for the harmonious word to place the beam.

In Japan there are seven days in which to work. Sunday has no special privileges. The Japanese workman takes his holiday when his village has a "matsuri" or feast to its patron God, or in the cherry viewing time, or the birthday of the boys and girls. No person in Japan is rich enough to have a birthday of his own. One for the girls and one for the boys and the matter is over for the year.

Where Poverty Shows Its Most Decent Aspect.

In no other country has poverty such a decent aspect. This is due partly to the harmonious costuming, and to that artistic instinct which is the heritage of this people. When O Yen, our maid, put a few flowers in a bamboo stalk, which served as a vase, we gazed upon them with despair of ever being able to emulate her skill.

One can also venture the assertion that no other country can produce such sweet-smelling crowds. The slight frame house, its adjustable partitions, its paper windows, its matted floors and the universal custom of leaving the shoes out of doors make for cleanliness.

Moreover, there is no man so poor that he has not his hot daily bath. This is his luxury and his medicine. The bath is the poor man's club. Here he parboils in company at the cost of a part of a cent. In the bath it is against etiquette to use soap, which would defile the bath for the others, since soap implies dirt.

Pulling the rickshaw, or pretty little man carriage—for Japan does not breed horses—is one of the great industries of Japan. The "kurimaya," as the rickshaw coolie is called, is a man whose legs are developed at the cost of the rest of his body. His arms are thin and flaccid and his chest contracted. The alternate fierce heat and sudden chillings incident to his work induce lung troubles, which he is daily obliged to counteract. When his day's work is done he goes to the public bath, and in the hot water takes the swelling and pain out of his tired legs, and the soreness from his chest.

These "kurimaya," who become guides, philosophers and friends to the foreigners, are an interesting set of men, for the foreigner reacts on them. They pick up foreign phrases and take an interest in our affairs. After the naval victory at Manila, whenever the wife of a naval officer stopping in Yokohama started downtown, there was an unusual rush for the privilege of drawing her. Generally the men, unlike our cabbies, regard scrupulously one another's time for a fare, or draw lots to decide. It appeared that the eagerness mentioned was altogether due to this indirect share this lady had in the American victory.

The individual workman, the skilled artisan, works under conditions so charming that the traveler goes to see him as well as to see his work. Such are the makers of art pottery, the painters and the cloisonne workers. The workshops surround a court. In the center of this is a pond, an islet, lotos flowers, a bronze stork and an overhanging tree. One wonders if the new industrial era, the introduction of the great industrial plants, and the herding of workmen will take away from that loveliness and charm that makes the Japanese working world unique. Certainly it would be an economic mistake, since it contributes to the national wealth in the same manner as the artistic instinct of the French has contributed to the wealth of the French nation.

The Sugar Confectioners Use.

An amateur candy maker says: "If I didn't take pains with the little things I'd be a failure. I always bear in mind that any old sugar that the grocer sells for pulverized is not good enough. Bar sugar is what confectioners use. Every lump must be rubbed out of it. In dipping chocolate creams never use sweetened chocolate; the bitter coating is delicious."

Making American Chauffeurs

WHAT is to become of the American coachman? There are probably 100,000 coachmen in this country today, but with the steady growth of the use of automobiles, both for pleasure and business, their future seems rather dark.

Can the coachman become a good chauffeur, and thus find a variation of his old profession? On the word of the manager of the largest training school for chauffeurs in America he cannot. He has been tried and found wanting.

In the ordinary course of his duties the average American coachman is called upon only at rare intervals to use his wits and his arms instantly to avert the shock of a collision. On the other hand, that is a strain the chauffeur lives under from the time he starts his car from the garage until he runs it up the incline on his return.

Coachmen Not a Success as Auto Drivers.

From time out of mind the coachman has been painted as a phlegmatic creature of leisurely habit of mind and action, while the chauffeur, though a new figure among the world's workers, has already made a name for himself as one distinguished for quick wit, remarkable agility, a daredevil kind of courage, and some mechanical ability.

To find such a combination among American coachmen is almost impossible, and therefore no one can look to him as the chauffeur of the universal automobile of the future. He must come from a different type of young manhood.

That type has been found.

Up to a year ago all the chauffeurs who drove the big French motor cars used in this country were imported from Paris, and were practically a part of the machines. As a rule, they were men of no particular intelligence, were inordinately vain, foolishly sensitive, and extremely difficult to get along with. Numerous paragraphs in the society journals have told of the trouble that millionaire owners of motor cars have had with their chauffeurs over quarters assigned to them in out-of-town hotels while touring, and of grievances of a similar nature.

Eccentricity of Some French Chauffeurs.

The average French chauffeur seems to be possessed with the idea that he owns the car he drives, and it is not an uncommon trick for one of these men, on having a difference of opinion with his employer, to stop the car and leave it by the roadside and take the first train back to town.

As the men who could drive these French machines were few in number the owners were at their mercy. Not that they couldn't drive the cars themselves, for anyone can drive a car after a few lessons, but the trouble was to drive at the best advantage and with the least possible wear and tear to machinery and running gear. The Frenchman possessed a perfect knowledge of the machines and the ability to repair them, while their employers were in absolute ignorance of these things. Therefore they had to tolerate the whims of the chauffeurs with as much patience as they could muster.

But with the increase in the number of these French motor cars in this country, it became necessary to establish repair depots, with French workmen from Paris. Two years ago a repair shop of this kind was opened in New York City, and it is now not only the largest of its kind in America, but it is also the most important training school for the American chauffeur in the United States.

When the French mechanics were brought here they were given as helpers skilled American mechanics. These helpers mastered the intricate mechanism of the French machines so quickly that in less than a year the manager of the repair shop was able to let the Frenchmen go. Then the American workmen were given American boys as helpers.

Interesting Evolution of the Native Chauffeur.

It is from these boys that the native chauffeur is evolved. Time has shown that he is more honest and reliable than his French cousin; that he is more intelligent and knows his place better; and that when the occasion arises for an exhibition of nerve and daring he is never found wanting.

The training of the young American chauffeur is of the best possible kind, for he begins at the very framework of the machine to learn all about it. These boys are about 17 years old. When they begin work they are paid $6 a week, while the trained mechanic earns from $18 to $21 for the same period.

When an automobile is sent into the shop for repairs the boy helps to remove the car from the "chassis," as the running gear of a motor car called; he learns to take apart the motor with its hundred intricate parts, and he becomes proficient in the details of the electric battery. In two years, if he sticks to the shop, he has become a skilled mechanic.

But from the point of view of the foreman of the repair shop, that is where the trouble lies. The "helper" doesn't stick to the shop. It is a part of his duty when a machine has been repaired to take it out on the road and test it. As a result, from four to eight months after the boy has become a "helper" these testing trips have made him as good a chauffeur as the owner of a motor car could find the automobiling world over. The owners of automobiles know it, and the helper becomes a full-fledged chauffeur forthwith.

How a Brooklyn Coal Dealer Cornered the Celestials

A STRANGE looking card tacked on the wall of a Chinese laundry attracted the attention of a man in Brooklyn the other day, and he asked of the proprietor whether it set forth the skill of the laundryman or if it were a cut-rate price of laundry work. The Chinaman replied:

"Ilisheeman makee China letter allee samee Chinaman. Sellee John coal. Velly good Ilisheeman."

The card was really that of a large coal concern which some time ago had for three years a monopoly of the Chinese laundry trade in New York. In the employ of the firm at that time was a young Brooklyn Irishman. Quick witted and enterprising, he was on the lookout for trade.

He had befriended a Chinese laundryman a year or two previously, and frequently had a laborious chat with him. He supplied him with coal, and one evening asked the laundryman if he would write him a Chinese letter recommending the coal sold by his concern. The Celestial readily complied. The Irishman drafted an advertising card and his friend put it into Chinese for him. Whether or not he used the best grammar in the translation is hard to say, but at any rate the circular worked like a charm.

The Irishman then went around to all the Chinese laundries in New York and Brooklyn, handed the owner a copy of the hieroglyphics, and tacked another copy up on the wall over the laundryman's ironing board. The coal firm's business picked up with a jump, and they soon had a clientele of pig-tailed Celestials that amazed the trade. In fact, the laundrymen of the two boroughs practically deserted the men who had previously supplied them with coal, but would give no explanation as to why the change was made.

For three years the Hibernian's employers enjoyed a monopoly of this coal supplying. The matter was discussed on the floor of the Coal Exchange time and again, and finally a quiet inquiry was instituted. A week or two after the cat was out of the bag. One of the cards was noticed by an investigator sent out to learn the facts, and he bribed a Chinaman to translate it for him.

When this was reported at the exchange, there was a great laugh at the manner in which the young Irishman had quietly gathered in the dollars. Even the men who had lost customers congratulated him on his enterprise, and more than one bottle was opened to celebrate the discovery.

He is still in the same business, but no longer enjoys the monopoly. As he is a good story teller, his narration of the scene on the exchange when the Chinese circular was translated to the members always "brings down the house."

Was Ready to Leave the Fence.

"You can't play with Tommy any more if you are on the fence," Tommy's mother said teasingly to Dicky, a little neighbor. "Tommy's a politician and there's only one party for him."

Dicky reflected soberly, then he said, "Can't I please play wiv him if I always come 'round by ze gate?"